

# The SCOOP on Marijuana: Is marijuana harmless?

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Marijuana is the most commonly identified illegal drug in fatal accidents and a significant cause for nearly half a million emergency room visits. Legalization and the use of marijuana is being widely discussed in Virginia. To help you make an informed decision, here are some facts cited from the National Institute on Drug Abuse:

- ⇒ Marijuana affects your brain, your self-control, your lungs. The brain is essential to helping you make wise choices and responding to situations.
- ⇒ Marijuana use makes it difficult for you to judge distances and react to signals while driving.
- ⇒ Marijuana contains over 400 chemicals that change how your brain works. THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) is the main active chemical in marijuana and the amount of THC determines its potency. The THC level in marijuana produced today is 15% higher the level present in the 80's. However, marijuana can be laced with other substances like PCP, or crack cocaine. The amount of THC varies from grower to grower.
- ⇒ THC attaches to specific sites called cannabinoid receptors in your brain. The receptors influence learning, memory, appetite, and coordination. Marijuana use has been linked to depression, anxiety, and personality disturbances. (samhsa)
- ⇒ One in six people who use marijuana as a teen will become addicted.
- ⇒ In 2012, 7.3 million people 12 and older had a marijuana abuse or addiction problem. The number of people affected by abuse or addiction has almost doubled since 2010.
- ⇒ You can experience an acute psychotic reaction or panic attacks from the effects of marijuana.
- ⇒ Research shows that if you smoke marijuana regularly, you could find your IQ lowered by as much as eight points!

Should you have any questions about addiction or resources, please visit:  
[www.chesterfield.gov](http://www.chesterfield.gov) or [www.chesterfieldsafe.org](http://www.chesterfieldsafe.org)